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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

Draft decision A/C.2/47/L.8/Rev.1

1. The CHAIRMAN introduced a revised draft decision entitled "Proposed revisions to programme 16 (Environment) of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997", contained in document A/C.2/47/L.8/Rev.1, pursuant to the suggestion by the delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that the text of the plan should be consistent with that of Agenda 21. The Committee had recommended that the revisions should take the form of a draft decision of the Chairman which, once adopted, would be transmitted to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 84: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITMENTS AND POLICIES AGREED UPON IN THE DECLARATION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION, IN PARTICULAR THE REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.9

3. Mr. SHAUKAT (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.9, entitled "International cooperation for economic growth and development: (a) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of the Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries; (b) Implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade". He said that the text of the draft resolution did not exclude, but rather, complemented, the text of the Cartagena Commitment as well as that of the other programmes mentioned in the third preambular paragraph, and pointed out that at the beginning of that paragraph the words ",in this connection," should be inserted between "Taking into account" and "the Cartagena Commitment".

4. Draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.9 was adopted as orally amended.

5. Mr. Guerrero, (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/47/340, A/47/375-S/24429, A/47/391, A/47/499, A/47/564)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/47/419 and Add.1-3)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued) (A/47/340, E/1992/28)

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued) (A/47/312-S/24238, E/1992/28)

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued) (A/47/264, E/1992/29, E/1992/71)

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued)

6. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, his delegation, in commenting on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, had commended the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational activities) (CCSQ (OPS)), had noted the emergence of a new spirit of cooperation among the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and among those of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, and had stressed the importance of implementing that resolution rather than testing new policies.

7. Although the reform process called for in General Assembly resolution 44/211 clearly could not have been completed in only three years, further progress could have been achieved. Positive intentions to strengthen the resident coordinator and country representation systems had largely been hampered by agency rivalries and competing mandates. Three years earlier, the concern of Member States at the lack of collaboration, coherence and efficiency in the programming of United Nations activities had led them to adopt General Assembly resolution 44/211. That concern currently persisted. It therefore was essential at least to identify the main causes of the obvious shortcomings so that an effort could be made to eliminate them.

8. Because of its neutrality and the range of its activities, the United Nations had a comparative advantage in many fields which, however, was not always translated into actual capability. Inadequate coordination between the agencies and a lack of technical support had undermined the effectiveness of its development assistance efforts. Accordingly, it should provide assistance essentially in those areas in which the assistance of other multilateral or bilateral donors could not prove more effective. The coordinating role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as envisaged in the consensus of 1970, had been undermined by the proliferation of funding sources for United Nations system development assistance and of its local representations. The common country strategy recently approved by ACC as a framework for the programming of assistance could prove very useful, but the approval process had taken too long. It was to be hoped that there would be more progress during the coming three years. His delegation strongly supported the concept

(Mr. Marks, United States)

of an integrated United Nations office which, under the leadership of the resident coordinator, would lower administrative expenses and ensure greater continuity and efficiency in providing multisectoral advice and technical support to Governments. Accordingly, the resident coordinator should represent all the agencies of the system.

9. Over the next few years, multilateral and bilateral donors would no doubt assign the highest priority to emergency assistance and technical assistance in addressing global problems such as environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, and the transition to democracy and the market economy in the countries of eastern Europe. In addition, the less developed of the former Soviet bloc countries, as well as others in Africa, Asia and Latin America, would require long-term assistance in building up their legal and institutional framework and participatory mechanisms in the political and economic spheres. The United States acknowledged the need to develop national capacity, reform political institutions so as to make them more representative, carry out long-term structural adjustments to make developing economies more competitive and social services more efficient, achieve sustainable development, mitigate the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the least developed countries, and facilitate the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons. It was in the interests of donor and recipient countries alike to improve the operational activities of the United Nations at the country level. The United States looked forward to working with all interested parties to achieve the key objectives of General Assembly resolution 44/211.

10. Mr. HUSLID (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, said that the current global situation illustrated very clearly how closely efforts to maintain peace and security were linked to economic and social development. While the chief responsibility for development of the developing countries fell to their Governments and peoples, there was no doubt that the United Nations and the international community must also provide them with substantial aid. Multilateral cooperation with a multisectoral approach offered important comparative advantages, and in order to use it to the maximum it was necessary to strengthen the activities of the United Nations in the social and economic fields. It was essential to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations in order to support developing countries in their efforts aimed at creating economic opportunities for their peoples, at providing basic social services and protecting the most vulnerable groups, at promoting the sound management of natural resources, and at facilitating participation of the entire community in the development process.

11. He stressed the need to improve the operational activities of the United Nations, whose efficiency had suffered as a result of fragmentation and lack of coordination. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/47/419 provided a very useful analysis, but did not make specific proposals. Resolution 44/211 was a good basis for embarking on a reform of development assistance activities at the field level, a reform which must

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

tackle issues of substance and of organization. Changes in the demands of the developing countries and the interdependence of the world economy required a coherent and strong multisectoral response from the United Nations system. Resources were scarce, and must thus always be managed in the most cost-effective manner. In that regard, he laid great emphasis on the close relationship between the efficiency of activities of the development system and their funding.

12. The Nordic countries supported the efforts made to enhance cooperation at the field level between all the United Nations organizations through the formulation of a single country strategy. They supported an enhanced role for the resident coordinator, on the understanding that the ultimate responsibility for coordination of external assistance lay with national Governments. The formulation of a country strategy was contingent upon the existence of a national structure embracing all development activities. The United Nations strategy for each country should respond to specific country needs and priorities, but should also build upon internationally approved development strategies, interacting with the Bretton Woods institutions to identify areas of cooperation and complementarities. The single strategy entailed specific programming mechanisms, such as the programme approach and national execution. Use of those mechanisms would contribute to achieving greater relevance, flexibility, cost-effectiveness and impact in relation to national programmes and priorities, and would strengthen Governments' capacity to coordinate external assistance. To achieve those aims, the practical working arrangements at the field level needed to be revised, and more needed to be done to ensure a better harmonization of programming cycles, both within the United Nations system and in relation to Governments' planning cycles.

13. Decentralization was not simply a question of delegating authority. The United Nations development system needed field staff with the necessary capacity; and that in turn required a new type of guidance and advice from Headquarters and the adoption of a human resource management policy which would facilitate staff mobility and career development, while taking into account family situations, cultural differences and the special needs of women staff members. With regard to the role of the resident coordinator as the leader of the United Nations development team in the field, the qualifications required to fill that post should be more clearly spelled out. In that context he stressed the important role given to the resident coordinator in General Assembly resolution 46/182. In efforts to strengthen that role it was important to avoid bureaucracy and extra costs, and to increase the level of trust among United Nations organizations.

14. Better coordination of development activities and more efficient management of human resources were necessary tools for improving the United Nations development system, but they were not sufficient in themselves. The Nordic countries were convinced that the present governing system for the main operational funds and programmes must be reformed, by establishing an International Development Council, to provide policy guidance in a coherent

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

manner. In addition there was a need for smaller governing bodies, to enable the respective funds and programmes to give more focused guidance on a continuous basis. That, in brief, was the main thrust of the Nordic project, which had as its other pillar the need for sufficient and predictable financing.

15. Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico) said that his country attached great importance to operational activities for development, since they constituted the direct contribution of the United Nations to the economic and social development of Member States. Referring to the note by the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive policy review (A/47/419), he said that that document would facilitate the adjustment to the new challenges and opportunities resulting from the changes affecting the world as a whole. In spite of the ambitious scope of the goals of resolution 44/211, some progress had been made in its implementation. Programming, both between countries and between the organizations concerned, should be tackled with flexibility, with account taken of cultural differences among the receiving countries. The role of the resident coordinator with regard to coordination among other representatives of the system should be strengthened. With regard to decentralization, his delegation considered that the principle of subsidiarity should be applied to field operations, so as to provide more rapid and flexible responses to requesting countries.

16. He was concerned at the possibility that, with a substantial part of operational activities devoted to humanitarian and emergency work, other issues that were the underlying causes of development problems might be neglected. Further matters for concern were the fall in levels of official development assistance and the reduction in the number of projects approved.

17. Mr. BARAC (Romania) said that his country's delegation attached particular importance to operational activities for development, since they played an important role in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. Currently, the United Nations Development Programme was working across all sectors to assist developing countries in strengthening their national capacities for managing all phases of the development process.

18. General Assembly resolution 44/211, a landmark resolution, had set in motion a system designed to adapt the United Nations development process to the new requirements of the 1990s, and had urged Governments to assume responsibility for the execution of projects and to formulate programmes that could make optimal use of national capacities and international support. In order to facilitate that process, the resolution had also called for stronger programming, more decentralization and increased reliance on the resident coordinator system. His delegation firmly supported those measures.

19. The note of the Secretary-General (A/47/419) contained a comprehensive account of the measures implemented so far for reforming the United Nations

(Mr. Barac, Romania)

system of operational activities for development. Romania was grateful to the Secretary-General for his recommendations, and ready to endorse them. The note showed that some specific steps had already been taken to improve cooperation in the programming of operational activities, but, the results achieved indicated that not all United Nations organizations were fully committed to the process. There were differences among them in understanding and application of operational concepts, such as programme approach and the methods of achieving decentralization.

20. For full implementation of resolution 44/211 the following measures needed to be taken: an integrated response by the United Nations system to the needs of recipient countries through the establishment of a single, coherent United Nations country strategy; further harmonization and adaptation of programming cycles of all United Nations funding agencies to the planning periods of the recipient countries; extension of national execution; the greatest possible decentralization from Headquarters to the field; a strengthening of the role of the resident coordinator; further harmonization and simplification of project formulation, evaluation and monitoring; a more assured and stable basis for the financing of operational activities; clarification of the mandates and individual roles of the United Nations organizations by the General Assembly so as to reduce duplication and overlaps; and a more efficient management of operational activities. In that connection, the delegation of Romania supported the proposal of the Nordic countries. The active involvement of both donor and recipient countries was essential to the adoption of any further arrangements to achieve the objectives referred to. Romania was ready to cooperate in formulating and adopting practical measures for strengthening and improving the efficiency of operational activities of the United Nations system.

21. With regard to cooperation between Romania and the United Nations system in the field of operational activities for development, he expressed satisfaction with the valuable support received from UNDP in the implementation of some major projects aimed at achieving a successful transition. He also wished to mention the TOKTEN programme which had shown its first results, in particular in the agricultural sector. He hoped that the new country programme, prepared in close cooperation with the resident coordinator in Bucharest, would be approved at the special session of the Governing Council of UNDP in February 1993. Romania was also interested in participating in the implementation of European regional projects. He drew attention to a round table organized recently in Bucharest by UNDP together with the Government of Romania, dealing with the transition and the difficulties encountered. In closing, he wished to express his country's appreciation for the close and fruitful cooperation that existed with various United Nations bodies and agencies participating in the execution of technical assistance projects in Romania.

22. Mr. OLISEMEKA (Nigeria) said that his delegation fully supported the analysis and the solutions presented by the representative of Pakistan. The

(Mr. Olisemeka, Nigeria)

international economic climate was still unfavourable to the developing countries, since efforts to foster growth and development continued to be frustrated by denial of market access, dwindling resource flows, absence of foreign investment and other monetary, financial and trade factors. A concerted, comprehensive, long-term global effort and economic strategy would be required to achieve sustained and balanced economic growth.

23. The activities of the United Nations had to be directed towards strengthening the national capacity of the developing countries. On the basis of its neutrality, impartiality, universality and cultural sensitivity, together with its experience in the economic and social fields, the United Nations was the organization most suited to fulfil that function.

24. He was pleased to note that a number of initiatives had been taken to decentralize the operational activities of the United Nations system and implement other aspects of resolution 44/211. For example, the UNDP Governing Council had adopted far-reaching decisions on support costs, national execution and the programme approach, which had had a significant impact on the operations of both UNDP and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

25. Nigeria considered the coordination of development assistance to be extremely important, and held the view that the ultimate responsibility for such coordination lay with Governments. Formulation of a single United Nations country strategy demanded a concentration of the coordinating functions for all United Nations operational activities for development. The resident coordinators should be experienced and qualified senior officials, appointed by the Secretary-General and preferably but not necessarily from UNDP. They would be responsible for the control and management of all United Nations development activities in a given country.

26. Nigeria identified fully with the concepts of national execution and capacity-building, both of which were inherent in national responsibility. The United Nations and, in particular its field offices, had a responsibility to assist Governments in improving their capacity for project execution, by providing technical, managerial and administrative support. To that end, United Nations specialized agencies should concentrate on their roles as "centres of excellence" and increasingly focus on the provision of technical advice and the supply of services that progressively transferred responsibility for execution to the Governments themselves. The process should be facilitated by the support-cost successor arrangements and the gradual change to a programme approach.

27. He agreed with the representative of Pakistan, who had spoken on behalf of the Group of 77, that the programme approach could be meaningful only if in addition to decentralization of authority relations between Headquarters and the field offices were rationalized. To be effective, decentralization of authority had to extend to all United Nations funding agency representatives.

(Mr. Olisemeka, Nigeria)

Otherwise it would be impossible for them to fund, design and implement the interrelated components of a single strategy in a coherent manner. Decentralization was a mechanism for enhancing the efficiency and quality of external support to national development efforts. Field representatives should be entitled and authorized to cancel, modify and adapt development activities within the framework of approved global programme objectives. Delays in one activity could throw other interrelated activities off schedule.

28. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that the operational activities of the United Nations were potentially a promising means of achieving the economic and social goals set out in the Charter and that Member States were feeling a growing sense of urgency to fulfil that promise. The United Nations system should be able to respond better to the developmental needs of developing countries, and to that end it must solve problems such as inadequate policy formulation, poor priority setting, the lack of a coherent system for implementing development programmes and fragmentation of activities both at Headquarters and in the field.

29. Japan thought that the policy guidelines contained in General Assembly resolution 44/211 remained valid. It was to be hoped that in the next three years substantial improvements would be made. The progress already achieved since the adoption of the resolution included the agreement on the new support-cost arrangements, the programme-approach concept, and the CCSQ (OPS) guidelines. Generally speaking, however, the results had fallen short of expectations, for three reasons. The first related to the need to reorganize the intergovernmental policy-formulation mechanism in order to provide clear and coherent policies. The second was the weakness of the institutional mechanism responsible for system-wide monitoring of operational activities. The third was that the United Nations system must be strengthened at the field level, so that the organizations concerned could take a more unified and coherent approach.

30. With regard to the resident coordinator system and representation at the country level it must be borne in mind that the recipient Governments had the primary responsibility for coordinating external assistance, which should be based on their national development strategies and plans. Thorough consultation between recipient Governments and the United Nations system was obviously vital.

31. It was important to promote joint programming of the activities of the United Nations system at the country level, with a view to establishing a single United Nations country programming document. At present each United Nations agency formulated its own plan without paying attention to what other organizations were doing. Such a consolidation was advocated in General Assembly resolution 44/211, but little progress had been made to date. That had been attributed to the lack of a national programme framework, but it was not impossible to achieve unified United Nations programming without such a framework. Japan supported the move to formulate a single strategy for each

(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

country. Global strategies needed to be translated into a set of system-wide national strategies. Account would have to be taken of the comparative advantages of each United Nations organization and those of the United Nations with respect to other international organizations and bilateral donors. The leading-agency concept advocated in the Secretary-General's report, with a group of agencies organized around a specific task, for example poverty eradication, had merit as a first step towards joint programming, and it should be taken up as soon as possible through consultations with Governments.

32. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that to date the success of the resident coordinator system had depended excessively on ad hoc initiatives. The role of resident coordinators must be defined more clearly, and all the organizations concerned should make more systematic efforts in that respect. The following measures should be considered: resident coordinators should be given overall responsibility for the programming of all United Nations activities at the country level; they should be responsible on a continuous basis for follow-up, monitoring and implementation of joint programmes; they should act as catalysts for coordination with other international development organizations, for example the World Bank and bilateral donors; and they should play a leading role in providing technical support to Governments (for that purpose multidisciplinary teams could be formed under the leadership of the resident coordinators, and the analytical and research capacity of the United Nations system might be transferred to the country or regional level). Efforts should also be made to recruit as resident coordinators the best qualified persons in the United Nations development field. The use of common premises and integration of the system's field offices should be encouraged, particularly in the case of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. A further important step would be to improve coordination at the headquarters level of United Nations organizations. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and other coordination bodies, in particular the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, should play a more aggressive role.

33. Lastly, the decentralization of operational activities for development must be accompanied by measures for the clear delimitation of responsibilities, so that accountability was not watered down as functions were delegated.

34. Mr. BABA (Uganda) said that the basic idea of the triennial policy review was to assess how the work of the United Nations in the field of operational activities for development could be strengthened and made more effective and efficient. For it would thus be able to respond in an integrated way to the priority needs of the recipient countries.

35. Uganda supported the idea of a unified United Nations presence at the country level. However, the proposal by some Member States that such a presence should be headed by a United Nations ambassador presented many difficulties, including the possibility of creating parallel channels of communication between Governments and the United Nations which could become a

(Mr. Baba, Uganda)

source of conflict. In difficult situations the ambassador might have to be called upon to deal with issues such as violations of human rights, civil unrest or electoral problems which could easily put him on a collision course with various groups and even with Governments. The proposal did not make clear the relationship of the ambassador to the resident coordinator. The creation of superfluous structures must be avoided. And what must be avoided at any cost were inter-agency squabbles, for which some difficult situations offered fertile ground, for example the AIDS pandemic, refugee problems or human rights abuses. However, such difficulties were not insurmountable and could be resolved by means of a multisectoral approach.

36. The coordination of United Nations activities at the country level must be strengthened, especially coordination between those who furnished financial resources and those who possessed the necessary expertise. His delegation would like to know what mechanisms existed for resolving in the interest of recipient countries conflicts between the goals of coordination and the attraction of resources.

37. Improved coordination required a database covering all the interrelated activities of the United Nations at the country level. It would then be possible to tell what development activities were being carried out at any time and also to solve the current problems of overlapping. Such a database could already be established with the system's present computer capacity.

38. For many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the major preoccupation was not to decide whether structural adjustment programmes should be undertaken but how to design and implement them. Equitable income distribution and poverty reduction, political stability and good governance were essential factors for the success of the reforms. Structural adjustment programmes must be home-grown from their design to their implementation and evaluation, and they must be aimed at transformation of the economy in order to achieve sustainable economic development. The problem with present adjustment programmes was that they tended to be focused on macroeconomic balance at the expense of the human resources and services which were essential to long-term change. The United Nations therefore had the important function of incorporating macroeconomic analysis in the reform efforts.

39. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that, in order to meet the development challenges of the 1990s, there was broad agreement on the need for more integrated and coordinated programming of United Nations system cooperation; harmonization of programming at country levels; a shift away from small projects to more concentrated and integrated programmes; strengthening of the role of the resident coordinator; more decentralized and strengthened capacity of the United Nations system at the country level; a country-focused approach; maximum use of national capacity; and measures to enable Governments to assume fully the execution of projects funded by the United Nations.

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

40. Despite advances in programming, the resident coordinator system and inter-agency cooperation within the United Nations system, more emphasis had been placed over the past three years on analysis of problems and proposals than on taking practical measures. Nevertheless, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211 remained valid, and every opportunity should be taken to give them full effect and to improve activities both in the field and at Headquarters.

41. The volume of resources allocated to operational activities remained far below the economic and social requirements of developing countries. It was a tragic and ironic situation in light of the current debate on revitalization of the United Nations system in order to meet their needs, and the hopes raised by the end of the cold war. The projected growth in voluntary contributions had not been achieved, and Bangladesh urged donors to remedy those deficiencies.

42. The introduction of a programme approach instead of a project approach would facilitate coordination, but it would require increased decentralization of activities and adequate technical capacity in the field. Furthermore, the formulation, design, appraisal and monitoring of projects and programmes must be simplified and streamlined, and attention must be focused on the need to make those programmes more responsive to national priorities and fully to involve the national authorities in their planning and execution.

43. In order to ensure the success of programmes, the team leadership role of the resident coordinator in the integration and coordination of assistance provided by the United Nations system must be strengthened. However, the operational independence of a number of specific projects should be preserved, and Governments should retain direct access to programmes, funds and expertise of the relevant United Nations organs. Consequently, the existing arrangements among those bodies in the field should be retained, as part of a general coordination mechanism for which the resident coordinator would be responsible. He could also coordinate United Nations humanitarian assistance, but without playing a political role that could undermine his neutrality. Specific measures were needed to strengthen the national capacity of developing countries and to promote national execution.

44. With regard to the decentralization required by the new framework of country-level operational activities, the decentralized structure of UNICEF should be highlighted. It had allowed the agency to provide prompt assistance to Governments, as had the UNDP decision to delegate approval authority to Resident Representatives within the existing limits, thus eliminating arbitrariness in national execution. Decentralization and delegation of authority must take place in an environment of trust between Headquarters and the field offices.

45. The plight of the least developed countries had worsened recently. Many of those countries had undertaken structural adjustment programmes and had

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

sought United Nations assistance in developing economic policies, meeting the basic needs of their people and alleviating poverty. Closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions was required in order to safeguard the interests of the most vulnerable groups and to coordinate efforts for the execution of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and to mobilize additional resources for development.

46. Mr. AL-FARDAN (Bahrain) said that development organizations had played a very important role in developing countries, assisting them in establishing an adequate development infrastructure. The organizations and bodies of the United Nations system had broadened their activities to encompass all aspects of human life, to guarantee decent living conditions and to achieve equality in mutual cooperation while adding a human dimension to science and technology for development.

47. Human resources development in developing countries was a basic element of the mandates and tasks of several United Nations specialized agencies. The results obtained in that area had not come up to expectations, however. Developing countries attached great importance to human development, but their efforts had been hampered by the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, limiting the growth of the social infrastructure. In that connection, the convening of a world summit for social development proposed by the Economic and Social Council would strengthen the role of the United Nations, and would establish more equitable economic relations with the developing countries.

48. The health of the population was essential to sustainable development. Although the goals set in that area for the year 2000 remained valid, all the expectations raised by the strategies employed had not been fulfilled. The United Nations should give high priority to health services. In view of the limited resources available, the efficiency of existing programmes must be increased with the support of the donor community.

49. Targets for United Nations technical cooperation in training had not been met, despite good results achieved in some countries. UNDP had played an important role in management training in Bahrain, although Bahrain had not been included under Governing Council resolution 85/16. Bahrain hoped that omission would be remedied, since, like many other developing countries, it still required UNDP assistance in field studies and training of experts and technicians if it was to increase the pace of development.

50. Bahrain urged an intensification of operational activities in order to promote development and strengthen the economic structures of developing countries, with no restrictions on the granting of assistance, and in application of the principle of universality.

51. Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia) said that the previous triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system, in 1989, had taken place in a very different context. With the end of the cold war, the world had undergone radical transformations, had grown increasingly interdependent and, while offering great opportunities for progress, suffered from major transitional problems and disruptions. The operational activities of the United Nations system should, therefore, be more responsive to the development needs of the third world.

52. The obstacles were formidable: a persistent world recession, the yawning gap between the developed and the developing countries, pervasive poverty, the crisis facing economies in transition and the threat of growing protectionism among powerful economic blocs. There was also a lack of adequate resources. Economic and social conditions were deteriorating as a result, bringing about abject poverty, hunger and malnutrition, vast migrations and political instability.

53. Also important were the internal constraints on operational activities, such as the lack of coherence and coordination. It was no wonder that the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 had not materialized. Although the Secretary-General's report (A/47/419) confirmed the validity of that resolution's provisions, little progress had been achieved to date. The key to future success lay in strengthening national capacities and enhancing country-level performance. To meet the development needs of recipient countries, operational activities must be reoriented and decentralized, with emphasis placed on their multidisciplinary character and the perception of development as people-centred. In any event, technical assistance from the United Nations system required a substantial increase in financial resources, on a predictable and assured basis, in accordance with the principles of neutrality and objectivity and without the imposition of any conditions.

54. He noted that UNDP and UNFPA had implemented measures to decentralize and coordinate operational activities and to strengthen national capacities, steps that constituted progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211.

55. Mr. FERNANDEZ DE COSSIO DOMINGUEZ (Cuba) said that the restructuring and improvement of the system of operational activities for development must be based on a reiteration of the principles governing the use of United Nations-administered funds: universality, neutrality, voluntariness and grant nature. The Secretary-General's report (A/47/419) indicated some progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which his delegation supported and regarded as a solid basis from which to introduce the necessary reforms into the system of operational activities for development. The effectiveness of assistance projects and international cooperation depended on the existence of a strategy or wide-ranging programme of development objectives defined by the recipient country, and each country's particular economic, political, cultural and historical circumstances must be borne in mind.

(Mr. Fernandez de Cossio Dominguez, Cuba)

56. The assistance and technical cooperation provided to Cuba by the United Nations had long been delivered through a programme approach linked to the national development plan. There were some developing countries where conditions were still not ripe for such an approach, chiefly owing to the distortions inherent in underdevelopment. The measures adopted must therefore be flexible and objective. National capacities must be used to the fullest possible extent, although, as the Secretary-General noted in paragraph 147 of his report, national execution should not lead to a loss of the technical role of the specialized agencies, whose support was essential to operational activities. Responsibility for coordinating United Nations assistance activities lay chiefly with the recipient countries, although, if the local authorities were not fully able to do so, the country's resident coordinators would need to assume a more active role. In that connection, Cuba favoured maintaining the functions of the representatives of individual agencies.

57. With regard to decentralization, he drew attention to Cuba's positive experience since the setting out of the basic principles consolidating the system of operational activities for development in 1970. The delegation of authority would help promote the desired programme approach. Adequate resources were essential for the reform and restructuring of operational activities for development. Accordingly, the contributions of the major donor countries, which had pledged to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GNP to official development assistance, must be increased. Any serious effort by the United Nations in the area of its operational activities for development should first tackle the problem of the outflow of resources from developing countries resulting from their external indebtedness and the unfair international trading system .

58. Mr. NGUYEN MING THONG (Viet Nam) said that the triennial review of the key policy aspects of operational activities for development could not be more timely, given the changes in the world situation which necessitated the adaption and improvement of those activities. Unfortunately, the reforms undertaken by many developing countries were being frustrated by numerous problems. For many millions of people, hunger, malnutrition, disease, backwardness and unemployment remained the order of the day.

59. Yet there were encouraging signs of international cooperation, and the interdependence among nations in achieving peace, security and sustainable development was increasingly being recognized. That was why operational activities for development were important. In his delegation's view, General Assembly resolution 44/211, one of the landmarks in the history of the Organization's operational activities, remained valid. The strength and comparative advantage of those activities stemmed from the fact that they were apolitical, impartial, unconditional and capable of responding flexibly to the varying needs, priorities and circumstances of developing countries. Unfortunately, the resources that had been made available for United Nations operational activities for development were far from adequate. That situation

(Mr. Nguyen Ming Thong, Viet Nam)

must be addressed so that the revitalization and strengthening of those activities could continue.

60. Among the positive steps taken to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations operational activities were the acceleration of national execution, national capacity-building, training, the simplification of procedures, the harmonization of programming cycles, increasing administrative flexibility, delegating authority to the field level and the application of a programme approach. In dealing with the crucial task of improving the coordination of activities at the field level, the comparative advantage enjoyed by some agencies in their efficient cooperation with Governments must be taken into account.

61. The Government and people of Viet Nam placed great importance on their relations of cooperation with United Nations agencies and were grateful for the valuable assistance they had received from them. Assistance from UNDP had focused on support for the economic reform process, sustaining and strengthening economic performance, encouraging key areas of human development and promoting environmentally sustainable growth and human settlements development. WFP had provided emergency food aid and implemented food-for-work projects. UNICEF had made tremendous contributions in the form of low-cost projects dealing with oral rehydration therapy, water supply and sanitation, universal basic education, nutrition and food security as well as maternal and child primary health care. UNFPA had provided much-needed assistance for population and family planning programmes which had resulted in a significant reduction in the country's population growth rate. Viet Nam strongly supported the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Population and Development to be held in 1994.

62. Mrs. AMERASEKARE (Sri Lanka) expressed her delegation's appreciation for measures taken by United Nations bodies and agencies, particularly the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)), the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and UNDP, to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211. However, much remained to be accomplished. Among the resolution's objectives were the achievement of greater coordination of United Nations assistance at the field level, the adoption of a programme approach and national execution of projects. The measures already taken in that connection constituted only the beginning of a process which required three vital elements in order to gather momentum: (1) a greater awareness of the benefits of using UNDP resident representatives for in-country coordination of United Nations assistance without prejudice to the coordinating work of local authorities - the usefulness of that system had been clearly demonstrated during emergencies requiring humanitarian assistance; (2) a spirit of cooperation among field representatives of the United Nations system backed by clear instructions from their respective headquarters so that everything would not depend entirely on the resident coordinators; in the absence of such cooperation other measures, such as common premises, might not have the desired effect; and (3) the capacity of

(Mrs. Amerasekare, Sri Lanka)

developing countries to adopt the programme approach and assume responsibility for project management; to that end, training programmes would have to be organized for local officials. The process of decentralization would enhance the ability of the United Nations field representatives to respond to the needs of the recipient countries; however, considerations of accountability must not inhibit the delegation of authority.

63. Mrs. HEPTULLAH (India) said that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system were of particular relevance to the developing countries because they epitomized the essence of multilateral cooperation based on the principles of universality, neutrality and partnership, and their ultimate objective was the achievement of individual and collective self-reliance through endogenous capacity building. Such activities had provided support to developing countries in their development efforts and, owing to their multiplier effect, had enabled those countries to use their human, physical and financial resources more efficiently and to strengthen their institutions. The triennial review of operational activities would make it possible to further strengthen their scope and implementation, in accordance with the national development objectives and policy priorities of developing countries, and would help in detecting their shortcomings in order to remedy them and maximize the benefits of those activities, despite the modest resources available. India attached high priority to the operational activities of the United Nations system and, despite its severe resource constraints, was one of the most active participants, as both donor and recipient, in the system's funds and programmes. India's contributions to UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA were among the highest from developing countries.

64. The recognition by General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 46/279 of the responsibility of national Governments for formulating national development plans was a clear reaffirmation of the intrinsic and sovereign right of each recipient country to determine its own development priorities in keeping with its needs and capacity. Both resolutions stressed the importance of national execution of programmes and projects funded by the United Nations system in order to integrate the assistance received into the national development framework smoothly.

65. Her delegation generally agreed with the idea of improving coordination between the various United Nations activities, provided that the principles of universality, neutrality and partnership were not sacrificed. Coordination, therefore, must be an exercise aimed at achieving a better integration of the various agencies' programmes and projects with national development strategies and to improve the relationship between national Governments and the various funding and executing agencies while maintaining the independence of those agencies in order to make optimum use of their expertise and knowledge. Her delegation also agreed with the Secretary-General's observations in document A/47/419 that coordination between United Nations agencies and Governments must be improved, programming cycles must be prepared in accordance with national structures, needs and priorities, and the apolitical role of operational activities must be maintained.

(Mrs. Heptullah, India)

66. The United Nations had two primary functions, maintaining international peace and security and promoting the development of developing countries. In carrying out the second function, multilateral cooperation was an essential factor, and operational activities constituted a singularly beneficial mechanism. The triennial review provided an opportunity for strengthening national capacities in order to achieve prosperity and growth in the developing world.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.